



For Iva Razen, her best birthday party was shared with the Jewish community of Aruba.

The traditional Friday night Sabbath service was a very special occasion this week, as the Jewish community gathered at Temple Beth Israel, not only to welcome the Sabbath, but also to welcome to their community Iva Reizen of Atlanta, Georgia and her son Richard.

Iva and her son have long been benefactors to the temple since they first started coming to Aruba sixteen years ago, and three years ago, they bought a home in Aruba, close to the temple, with the intention of becoming permanent residents. They have been traveling back and forth between Aruba and Atlanta on the average of six to eight times a year since then.

To celebrate what they hope will be their final relocation, and Iva's 92nd birthday, they invited all of the temple members to join them a fabulous Shabbos feast provided by Carlos of Dushi Bagels. Iva was the center of attention as Rabbi Marcelo Bater lead the congregation in songs that celebrate the weekly day of observance, and a resounding chorus of "Happy Birthday."

Iva's son Richard confessed that they have longed to make Aruba their permanent home for many years, and will complete the arrangements over the next few months. Richard plans to retire from his very successful practice as a psychologist in Atlanta, and Iva expresses the desire to do it as soon as possible. "Aruba has a small, but vibrant Jewish community, which attracted us strongly to the island, plus of course the beautiful weather, the wonderful ethnic diversity of the people, and the sense of safety we have here. The biggest attraction though is how warm and friendly all the people are, how incredibly and simply NICE, the license plates really do say it all – it is "One Happy Island," explains Richard.

As for Iva, she was absolutely thrilled with her birthday gathering in the temple. She and Richard had shared a birthday dinner the night before in the Tuscany Restaurant at the Marriott Resort, where they always stay, with about nine members from the community. Iva expressed on Friday night that in the past, she and her friends had oft celebrated her birthday at the Ritz Carleton in Atlanta, but that was "very formal, and perhaps a little stiff, tonight's party is so wonderful and different, it is like being with family, for me, this is the best party I have had in a long time."

All of the Jewish community of Aruba wishes Iva a very happy, healthy birthday and expresses the hope to share many more with her, and to express the sentiment to both her and her son, "Welcome to the family."